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ABSTRACT

A series of ten video-taped lessons (5 to 7 minutes long) dealing with specific methods of television production used in the Florida Technological University television laboratories were created and used by non-broadcasting majors in two experimental courses. The instructor met with students in the beginning of each quarter and gave brief directions for using the tape recorder and keeping their practice logs current. The students were responsible for scheduling viewing, observation, and practice sessions at their own convenience and the availability of the studios. Near the end of the quarter a production proficiency program was produced with each of the students serving in each of the ten production capacities, through a series of "round-robin" exercises. Based on the effectiveness of this approach, auto instruction tapes are now being used in broadcast performance courses and the instructional television course with additional tapes being developed to include new areas. (Author/LG)

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# AUTO INSTRUCTIONAL TELEVISION PRODUCTION AT FLORIDA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

(Presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention Chicago, Ill., December 29, 1972)

by

Robert L. Arnold

ED 073194

A geographic location is necessary for an understanding of the growth and problems of television production at Florida Technological University. FTU was authorized by the State Legislature in 1963. It was authorized to be in Orlando which is located about half-way between Tallahassee on the north end of Florida, and Miami, on the extreme south end. On an east-west line Orlando is located about midway between Tampa-St. Petersburg on the west coast, and Cape Kennedy on the east coast.

The name "Technological" was given to FTU at that time because of its proximity to the engineers that were working at Cape Kennedy, at Martin-Marietta, a large manufacturing company dealing specifically with space technology, and at other technological related industries in the area. However, the "technological" emphasis changed when Disney World made its announcement that it was also going to be located in Orlando.

When FTU opened with just freshman and junior classes in the fall of 1968, there were 2,500 students enrolled in what now is a four-year university. There were five Colleges within the University and of those 2,500 students, the Communication Department had about 50 majors. In the Radio-Television-Film area, we had one classroom that we could use part-time, one portable "Sparta" console, and a lot of excitement, interest, and energy generated by the students.

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We'll skip over the growth of the school very rapidly, but it is important to know the pressure we were under. In 1970, FTU had 4,200 students, approximately, and we had about 150 Communication majors. The College in which the Department was located, at that time, was Humanities and Social Sciences; however, it had become exceptionally large and it was decided that it would be split into two Colleges. Our Communication Department was affected because Theatre, which was at that time under Communication, went to the College of Humanities and Fine Arts. The rest of us stayed in the new College of Social Science. We now have in our Department of Communication; Journalism, Radio-Television-Film, Speech, Interpersonal Communication, and Communication Disorders.

By 1970, we had improved somewhat as far as the Radio-Television-Film division was concerned. We had two classrooms that were assigned for Radio-Television work. We had two portable "Sparta" consoles, a three-months' rental on a GBC television production unit, one 16 mm camera and four 8mm cameras. We were inundated with students in these production classes and the crowning blow to our planned type of production classes was that in one quarter it was necessary to put 40 students in radio production. Faculty members started to complain as well as the students. By 1971 we had 200 majors and one of the faculty members left because of our press to serve all of the students. But by this time we had established a foothold. We had been promised new facilities in the renovation of the library building on campus and they were under construction in 1971. We had gained permission to limit our production classes to 20 students but by this time all production classes were filled at pre-

registration. Also in 1971, our proposed graduate program in Communication had been approved and we were charged with getting the graduate program underway in the fall of 1971.

Under pressure like this, it was necessary for us to come up with some method of retaining a reasonable full-time equivalency of instructors to students. We had to satisfy the desires of the R-TV students, who obviously wanted the production classes, and we had to serve all students, or at least as many aswe possibly could, in the University whether they were Radio-Television majors or not. We wanted to expose them to the potential possibilities, the limitations, and the problems of television production, planning and usage. Our philosophy is that because television occupies so much of their time we would like to have every student in the University undergo exposure to the basic production problems. At that time we planned to go into auto-instruction television production, a method of self instruction. We had no idea how to start. We had no idea what method to undertake. We looked at all of the available films pertaining to radio and television production and they just did not seem suitable; either they were too long or they were over-produced or they didn't pertain to our equipment. We decided not to use any of those. Instead, what we decided to do, and what we hope will be a future permanent part of our curriculum, was to produce our own lessons on specific production units. Now remember, we were forced into this because of our past growth problems, our present exploding area of interest by students in Communication, and because of the predicted University growth. The Board of Regents in Florida has predicted that Florida Technological University will enroll approximately 15,000 students by 1980.

In order to serve any portion of those 15,000 students, we had to make some innovative plans. We produced a series of television production lessons and decided that each of these would be five to seven minutes in length; long enough so that if a student had fifteen minutes he could go to the studios and at least view a lesson. If he had a half hour, he could view a lesson and work on the equipment. The lessons were: "Studio Camera," "Studio Lights," "Microphones," "Hand Signals," "Audio Control Board," "Film Chain" and the "Video Tape Recorder". We had those completly produced by the time we started Winter Quarter, 1972.

At that time, we had approximately 7,000 students in the University; in the Communication Department we had around 300 majors, and we had 30 graduate students in our graduate program. In the Winter Quarter, we started to experiment with three students using these lessons. The purpose was to see if the lessons would work; if a student on his own time with "convenience scheduling" for himself and the studio, could learn the operation of certain television production facilities. We discovered that, yes, indeed, it did work! With just taped lessons and practice they could operate the camera, the lights, the switcher, etc. At the end of that quarter, we put the three students through a very small proficiency examination and they could handle the equipment. They did a good job even though there were other complications in that quarter.

For example we had just moved into our new facilities. It was the first shakedown quarter. Because of the new facilities, we had the opportunity to teach a broadcast performance type course and instructional television. We hadn't been able to teach these two courses before because of lack of facilities.

The demand for those courses was large enough so that we felt we had to repeat them in the Spring Quarter of 1972. Additionally, we registered 20 students in the auto-instructional course who were not Radio-Television emphasis students. They were not even in Communications. They came from Business, from Education, from Humanities, from the Fine Arts. They come from every College in the University. Not only undergraduate, but graduate students. These are students who have never seen or worked in, or are familiar with, a television studio.

In the Fall of 1972, we had 30 extra students going. We had four production courses which were allocated 32 hours of studio time, and we had this course with convenience scheduling. By convenience scheduling we mean that it's for the convenience of both the student and the facility. If a student goes to the studio desiring to view a video tape and one of our instructors has a class there, it is possible that the student can view the tape without interrupting the class. We have a separate recorder and monitor set up that is independent of our production system. We have discovered that we are doubling and tripling our studio usage. On the first day of class I introduce the students to the beginning video tape, "Video Tape Recorder." That's the only time that I talk with the students untill they think they're ready for a proficiency exam. Several times I have observed the following in our studio. Miss Ward who teaches a television production class, will haveher class operating in the studio. Professor Jackson, who is teaching the performance class, will be using an off-line tape and monitor to view performances of his students. And students in the auto-instructional class will be using a video tape recorder and a monitor to study their lessons. This is in effect, triple scheduling of studio space. This is very important. It's important to us for

establishing FTE, for justifying studio space in a very tight University space situation, and for permitting more students to realize the benefits, potential possiblities and problems of television. We've decided that this is so successful that we will offer it every quarter. We let 30 students enroll in the course - providing they are not majors, and this also is important, they cannot be majors.

We have in production another seven-minute program on operation of the radio-control board, another on portable audio recorders and we're starting a series on graphics, all of which will be available to all of the students. Since this has started, the instructor in the broadcast performance course uses the auto-instruction tapes. His students are mostly theatre majors...you remember that theatre separated from Communication a couple of years ago... who have had no access to television. They had no access to the possibilities for performance on television. But now our broadcast performance course is being taught, and is inundated with requests by students to take the course. However they must function as their own crew. We do not have enough students to provide a full operating crew for such a course, so rather than take the time to instruct the students in camera operations, setting up lights, etc., the instructor assigns them to schedule at their convenience the series of auto-instructional tapes. It's working out well for them.

The same thing has happened in the instructional television course where there are several majors from Education who want to use television. They are assigned television lessons to prepare and produce but again, rather than taking the time in class to teach them the fundamentals of facilities operation, they're assigned to review the auto-instructional tapes. So far, this has worked out.

There might be a limit. There might get to be a problem in scheduling. It might become so crowded that we'll have to expand the hours into the evening. At present the studio is available only from 9:00 in the morning until 4:30. That's the time available for student's use, but we may have to make some changes.

Additionally, we thought that it would be important to us - as important as the lessons themselves - to keep accurate account of students attempts to use the equipment. We have emphasized the necessity for having them sign-in whenever they want and to report the situation at that time. If a video tape recorder is not available, it's important for us to know that it wasn't available. If one of the pieces of equipment is broken, we must know that. If for some reason there's a personality problem; the engineer won't let them use the equipment, an instructor won't let them use the equipment or observe a production class in session, it's just as important for us to know this as it is for the student to get on with the lesson. So we keep very strict records. We have an individual log sheet for each student who attempts to participate in the course. From this -- we'll be able to come up with a lot of statistics and some solutions to the problems that are bound to occur.

Finally we hope that we'll be able to provide to the non-RTV major at FTU the opportunity for appreciation of and exposure to the many facets of television production which constitute such a large portion of their lives.